

REMARKS

Claims 1-24 were pending and considered. Claims 1-22 and 24 have been allowed. Only claim 23 has been rejected. In response, claim 23 has been amended. Reconsideration and allowance of claim 23 are respectfully requested.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiners indication that claims 1-22 and 24 are allowed.

Claim 23 has been rejected separately on three different references. Since the same amendments to claim 23 and the same analysis based thereon address all three rejections, the rejections will be discussed together.

Claim 23 has been rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by CA 912881 (Schiel).

Schiel teaches a roller press for pressing water from a papermaking felt, for example. Schiel does not teach a source of cleaning fluid, nor an applicator for applying the cleaning fluid. Schiel appears to merely press water from the felt, with no apparent washing. In fact, Schiel compensates for the possibility of contaminants in the felt by allowing the intermediate roll to float, so that “particles of dirt and the like, entrained by the web will merely cause the intermediate roller to yield” (page 3, lines 22-24). If Schiel performed appreciable washing, the particles would be removed. The apparatus of Schiel appears to have a primary purpose of de-watering.

Claim 23 has been rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 2,775,170 (Bustin, et al.).

Bustin et al. teaches a wet lap machine in which water and pressure are used to clean the

hot press screen during operation. A dilute aqueous alkaline detergent is flowed into the wet lap edges in the forming section. When the wet laps are heated and pressed, water and steam are emitted under pressure, which combined with the detergent keep the screen clear of occluded matter (column 2, line 66, through column 3, line 6).

Claim 23 has been rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by the prior art devices cited in U.S. Patent 1,468,057 (Walker).

Walker discloses a cleaning method in which a cleaning fluid is applied to a felt followed by suction on the dirty side of the felt. This is said to be an improvement over the previously proposed processes, including directing jets of cleaning fluid against the felts, and removing the fluid with squeeze rolls (page 1, lines 82-91).

In response to these three rejections, claim 23 has been amended. It is respectfully submitted that the invention as recited in amended claim 23 is neither taught, disclosed nor suggested by the teachings of Schiel, Bustin, et al. or Walker alone or in combination, and the invention recited in claim 23 provides advantages over the prior art.

Claim 23, as amended, recites in part a papermaking machine comprising:

a semipermeable membrane, ... configured for carrying a fiber web;
a plurality of conveyor rolls... configured for carrying at least one of
said semipermeable membrane and said fiber web;
...;
an applicator configured for applying said cleaning fluid to said
semipermeable membrane; and
a press configured for pressing said semipermeable membrane and ...
flushing said cleaning fluid therethrough.

Schiel teaches a roller press for removing water from a papermaking felt, and does not teach cleaning, merely dewatering. Bustin, et al. teaches a wet lap machine having a process for cleaning the hot press screen during operating by flow cleaning fluids into the wet lap as it is formed and generating steam to clean the screen. Walker appears to teach the use of squeeze rolls in the prior art for removing water from a felt. Neither Schiel, Bustin nor Walker alone or in combination teaches a papermaking machine including a semipermeable membrane carrying a web, a plurality of conveyor rolls carrying the web and/or the membrane, an applicator for applying cleaning fluid to the membrane and a press for pressing the semipermeable membrane and flushing the cleaning fluid therethrough, as recited in amended claim 23. The present invention provides an effective way of cleaning a semipermeable membrane having low air permeability. The semi-permeable membrane can be cleaned without disturbing paper quality. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 23 recites an invention patentably different from the prior art. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that no combination of the cited references teaches, discloses or suggests the subject matter of the amended claim 23. Claim 23 is therefore in condition for allowance, and Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of all rejections and allowance of claim 23 together with already allowed claims 1-22 and 24.

In the event Applicant has overlooked the need for an extension of time, an additional extension of time, payment of fee, or additional payment of fee, Applicant hereby conditionally petitions therefor and authorizes that any charges be made to Deposit Account No. 20-0095, TAYLOR & AUST, P.C.

Should any question concerning any of the foregoing arise, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (260) 897-3400.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to:
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Signature

May 1, 2003

Date

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